

Environmental Reference Group

Minutes

Date: Monday, 8 November 2021

Time: 5:00pm – 7:00pm

Venue: Zoom

Purpose

- Advise Council on the best ways to improve Wellingtonian's quality of life environmentally, socially, culturally and economically by protecting and enhancing the local environment.
- Bring knowledge and insight into Council around the environment, including water, energy, waste, biodiversity, urban design, climate change, heritage and transport management, in the context of Council's roles and priorities.

Attendance

Chairperson:	Sally Faisandier
Members:	Steven Almond, Mike Britton, Lynn Cadenhead, Arran Whiteford, Isla Day, Sally Faisandier, George Hobson, Clare Stringer, Michelle Rush, Chris Watson, David Batchelor
Councillors:	Cr Tamatha Paul
WCC Staff:	Siobhan Procter (Chief Infrastructure Officer), Moana Mackey (Chief Advisor to the CIO and CPO), Vida Christeller (Manager City Design and Place Planning), Claire Barlow (Democracy Advisor), Damian Storey (Democracy Advisor)

Meeting Procedures

The meeting opened at 5:00pm.

Apologies were received from the following members:

- Claire Stringer – for lateness

SF/AW apologies carried.

No issues were raised with the minutes of the previous meeting.

SF/LC minutes carried.

Damian Storey (Democracy Advisor) was introduced and welcomed to the group.

Items

Councillor update, Cr Tamatha Paul

Cr Paul updated members, advising that consultation has commenced on Let's Get Wellington Moving (LGWM). Members engaged with Cr Paul in discussions on LGWM, the Draft District Plan, and the Bike Network Plan documents and agreed that the next several weeks would be 'transport-focussed'.

It was explained that the Fossil Fuel Free City report emphasised traffic flows so the city is seen as a place to be rather than a thoroughfare, and demonstrated that reclaiming city space from vehicles for people as part of low carbon can work for many stakeholders.

Members enquired about the Te Kopahou Draft Network Plan, and were advised that the Pūroro Rangaranga | Social, Cultural and Economic Committee is due to report back on 2 December. However, it was noted that this report may not contain any decisions, and the report could be postponed until 2022.

Cr Paul informed members that Island Bay Cycleway group would attend *Pūroro Āmua | Planning and Environment Committee* on 10 November 2021.

Green Network Plan, Presented by Vida Christeller (Manager City Design & Place Planning)

Vida presented to the group on the Green Network Plan.

Key topics of discussion included:

- The reasons for the plan - framing green spaces from an asset perspective and the value of additional perspectives on urban greening.
- Several and wide-ranging points raised regarding unforeseen effects, e.g. LED lighting/flying insects; trees/bird strikes; tree cover/housing ownership and following Northern Hemisphere approaches which may not function the same way in Wellington's context.
- Questions regarding the inclusion of blue (water) networks in the plan. Staff clarified that while blue and green networks were linked, focus on blue networks specifically was outside the plan's scope.

- Food-bearing plantings – concerns were raised about traffic pollution affecting edibility, but members discussed the effectiveness of washing before eating.

Members thanked Vida and requested a copy of the slides.

Fossil Fuel Free City, Presented by Vida Christeller (Manager City Design & Place Planning)

Vida spoke to her presentation on the Fossil Fuel Free Report going to Council, followed by discussion. Topics covered included the following:

- Carbon-zero isn't traffic-zero. Electric Vehicles are envisaged and being planned for. The traffic circulation plan redefines the function of central city streets. Members discussed potential benefits (economic and otherwise) of people-friendly cities.
- Members noted that although the focus of this project is traffic interventions, a truly carbon-zero city would have to address matters such as using gas for cooking and heating.
- How to include people – providing feasible alternatives with public transport; using a pedestrian-safety lens not just a traffic-safety lens; including people to gain local knowledge; having a sufficient bedding-in period that protects the concept as people transition from reactionary to getting used to it, and finally behaviour change. Feedback through a centralised contact channel.
- Members discussed the possibility of the re-balance of the network allowing for further trials, e.g., bike libraries and e-bike schemes and time-based road sharing where different traffic gets different priorities at times of the day.

Members thanked Vida and requested a copy of the slides.

ERG meeting dates

Members were presented with the proposed schedule of 11 meetings for 2022. They were informed that the Terms of Reference allow for 12 meetings annually, so the suggested schedule contains an option for an extra meeting in the year (if it is required).

Members unanimously agreed to the schedule as presented.

Discussion on consultation and submissions

Members discussed making submissions on Cycle Networks, LGWM and the Draft District Plan (DDP).

They agreed that, for the Cycle Networks, the group should submit on general terms and high-level design elements, but that submitting on granular detail was best left to the residents and businesses of those areas.

Regarding the LGWM proposals, the group recognised that a major decision would be around modes of rapid transit – light rail vs bus rapid transit. A point was raised about 'gimmicks' – that while a rail line may be appealing from a technical view, if only half a line is built it may not be the best solution overall. The link to the LGWM website is <https://hello.lgwm.nz/>

Members noted that small variations in the Draft District Plan's wording could create very different outcomes; and that owing to its length, it would be difficult for one person alone to review the whole plan for submission. Members therefore agreed that although everyone should flag controversial issues for group review, individual members should focus on various elements of the draft plan based on their interest and expertise, to ensure that the plan's objectives aligned with its policies.

- David – Heritage and Character
- George, Clare, and Lynn – Biodiversity
- Sally – Resilience
- Isla – Renewable Energy
- Michelle – Three Waters Infrastructure

Members agreed to email Lynn if there were topics they would like to focus on, and that she would send the relevant parts of the DDP.

Moana advised that there is a video on how to make a submission on the website: [Draft District Plan \(wellington.govt.nz\)](https://www.wellington.govt.nz/draft-district-plan) and said that the easiest format for feedback was to follow the online process suggested.

Siobhan informed the group that the Three Waters Reforms will proceed, with entities aiming to be established by 2024 (Wellington would be in Entity C). Central Government is consulting in the New Year on economic regulation elements, although timeframes are expected to be tight.

Members' updates:

Transport – Michelle

Michelle will draft a submission on the Bike Network Plan that will be distributed to members for feedback. Submissions for this project are due 14 December.

Arran will review the LGWM consultation and collaborate with Michelle to ensure that the group's responses are consistent with each other. Submissions for this project are due 10 December.

Waste – Steven

Steven has been working on residual wastewater, which will be consulted on in the New Year. The relevant officer has confirmed that pre-consultation comments are not being sought.

He asked for comments on the landfill extension notes that have been sent through and asked for feedback to be given immediately after the 6 December meeting so that he can respond early in the New Year.

Water – Lynn

There are many complex issues regarding water, but the immediate priority should be the group's current submissions.

Heritage – David

Heritage week: the opening panel discussion event was very successful. The sector is currently preparing their submissions on the Draft District Plan.

Biodiversity – George

George is currently working on reviewing the Draft District Plan, with particular focus on SNAs as well as continuing regular meetings with the Ecology Manager.

Climate change – Chris

Chris advised that another group he is part of is taking the Council's airport company to Environment Court and that he has properly submitted a conflict of interest. Members noted that it would be beyond ERG's scope to become involved in the case, and further discussed possible legal and financial implications of involvement.

Meeting conclusion

The meeting concluded at 7:00pm.

Information

Next meeting date: 6/12/2021

Actions from this meeting:

1. Members to review plans to prepare for comment, as outlined above under *Discussion on consultation and submissions*.
2. Democracy advisors: Slides for *Green Network Plan* and *Fossil Fuel Free City* presentations to be distributed.